

Committee on Children
Public Hearing 2/5/15

Testimony of Lisa M. Vincent, Esq.

I am attorney in private practice in Torrington contracted to provide legal services to children and to parents who are involved with child abuse and neglect proceedings in our juvenile court. In addition, I am a parent of four children. I have a long-standing interest in the welfare of children and also in the rights of parents to raise those children. I believe in the value of limited government and believe that children and families are harmed when outsiders take too much action in the name of protection. Children are particular susceptible to the effects of both physical and emotional trauma, and the best protection for children, as a rule, is provided by the families who love and care for them.

I strongly oppose House Bill #5654, An Act Concerning Good Samaritan Protection For Those Entering Cars to Aid Children. I believe passing such a law would lead to a culture of vigilante justice. In fact, I observed such vigilante action in the city of Torrington last year in relation to dogs. We literally had people threatening to smash in windows with hammers to save animals that one person or another deemed to be in jeopardy. There was a huge issue on our community facebook page. When people get ideas in their mind that they are "saving" somebody or some animal, they lose all sense of reason. There is absolutely no reason that a concerned citizen could not call the appropriate law enforcement officials to rescue a child from a hot car.

It is not in the interest of children to have random strangers breaking into the car where they are sitting. It is not in the interest of society to pass laws that are based on a single tragedy, or even in this case, a recurring tragedy. There is substantial research that explains how children come to be forgotten in hot cars, and it is wise for the government to consider that research and take measures to protect children. But it is not okay to pass some law that allows people to take measures into their own hands. It is a dangerous proposition in my opinion, and not necessary for the protection of children.

I support Senate Bill #306, An Act Establishing an Independent Department Of Children and Families Ombudsman. Such an independent reviewing force is necessary to insure that the Department is meeting its obligations to children in their care. The current ombudsman office is useless as no proper investigations are conducted when parents raise serious concerns about the care their child is receiving. The Act should permit for parents to file complaints related to their own children. Children are not always able to file complaints on their own, and their attorneys do not always take the most aggressive action on their behalf.

I strongly oppose Senate Bill #312, An Act Concerning the Protection of Particularly Vulnerable Children. There is no need for a new law. We have very adequate child protection laws that give the department broad authority to investigate allegations of child neglect and maltreatment. As desirable as it might seem to be able to save every life and prevent every accident, the cost to family integrity and the cost to the right of the

family to live free of unnecessary government interference is a very high price to pay. There is absolutely no need for more expansive government oversight of where and how children eat, sleep, and play. It is dangerous to allow any more interference than already exists.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa M. Vincent
379 Prospect Street
Torrington, CT 06790
(860)626-8986
AttorneyLVincent@gmail.com